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YUGOSLAVIA:

Serbs Provoke New Violence

Serb-Croat fighting yesterday will inflame ethnic tensions while helping advocates of military intervention and proponents of rapid secession.

Croatian paramilitary forces yesterday seized a resort area in a Serb enclave taken over last week by ethnic Serb police. Serbs ambushed the Croatian forces, leaving at least two dead and nine wounded. Croatia says it has arrested nearly 30 Serbs.

Serbs in the enclave are organizing vigilante units and threatening a general uprising. Both regime and opposition leaders in Serbia yesterday urged the federal Army to take control of the disputed areas and disarm Croatian forces, and Serbian strongman Milosevic has sent a team to the enclave to arrange "medical aid." Milosevic last week publicly threatened to arm Serbs in Croatia—something he already has been doing clandestinely, according to various sources.

Federal military forces began deploying to the area late yesterday after obtaining federal Presidency approval. The Presidency later ordered the Army to enforce a cease-fire and put key garrisons on alert, told all other forces to withdraw, and scheduled another summit with republic leaders for Wednesday.

The clash will harden Croatian and Serbian popular resistance to any compromise proposals and will permit Milosevic to further fan the nationalist passions he has used to build his power base. Croatian leaders will come under growing popular pressure to deal forcefully with the Serb rebellion.

Prointervention hardliners in the federal Army may seize upon this incident to again urge some form of martial law; Serb extremists may help by trying to provoke more clashes. The clash and the military deployments also will play into the hands of radical Slovene secessionists, who almost certainly will try to persuade their legislature to reconsider a proposal to secede by midmonth.

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